As in their preparations for buffalo hunting, already described, the superstitions of the Indians make it necessary to appeal, by their mysteries, to supernatural aid and protection; so, while preparing to start on a hunt for the grizzly bear, they dance and sing to the invisible Spirit supposed to watch over the destinies of this animal. This grotesque and amusing ceremony is called the "Bear Dance;" and all who wish to participate in the pleasures and honour of the hunt, must unite in the dance, which is often continued for several days together previous to the start, with beating of drums, shaking of rattles, and uniting their voices, invoking the aid and protection of the "Bear Spirit," which they think holds somewhere an invisible existence, is sure to be present on all such occasions, and must needs be consulted before they can count upon a reasonable prospect of success.

This droll masquerade is one that I witnessed while in a Sioux village on the Upper Missouri River, where one of the medicine men, who seemed to be the leader of the dance, placed over his person the entire skin of a bear, and led off the dance as he was peeping through the skin, which formed a mask that hung over his face. Several others in the dance wore masks over their faces, made of the skins of bears' heads, while each one wore a patch of the bear's skin and hair tied around his ankle. In this curious plight they all tilted off in rapid succession, following in a circle, raising both feet equally in their jumps, and that in perfect time to the frightful chaunts of their voices; whilst all were closely imitating the habits of the animal by the motions of their hands, representing the bear in motion, or (by the hanging of their paws) sitting upon its hind feet and looking out for the approach of an enemy.

Plate Nº 19.

ATTACK OF THE GRIZZLY BEAR.

The preliminaries of the hunt for the Grizzly Bear having been settled in the manner described in the preceding plate, and the traces of the animal having been followed up by the party until they are in sight of the game, they are at once in action, as in the present illustration, without the trouble and fatigue of a long and desperate race, from the necessity of which they are exempted by the habits of the animals, themselves always on their hunts, and so indiscriminate as to the kind of game that may fall in their way, that they are ready to pounce upon Man as well as Beast, and are sure to meet him half way.

From the entirely intractable and ferocious nature of this animal, which has defeated every effort to tame or domesticate it; and from its enormous strength, and the length and sharpness of its claws, which are used like those of the tiger, to seize and to tear its prey, it is more feared than any other animal of the American prairies; and hunters, red or white, generally evade a scuffle with it, except when, as in the present instance, there are a number present, mounted and armed with the lance.

The Grizzly Bear is often killed weighing nearly a thousand pounds; and from the great difficulty of penetrating its vital parts with the arrow, the lance is generally used, as in the present instance; and instead of running by its side, as in the case of the buffalo, the hunter is met, and that in an awkward position for giving the fatal blow with the lance, unless by stratagem, which is generally resorted to; exciting the animal to make its rush upon one horse, when the nearest horseman dashes by it, and driving his lance into its side, invites the animal's fury upon himself; and as it turns its exposed side, receives another and another blow, until by a succession of these stratagems and deadly thrusts, with all its huge strength and tenacity of life, it falls, though a dear-bought victim to its pursuers, as in the present illustration.

This ferocious animal may be justly said to be omnivorous; yet in those vast regions where the buffaloes graze, it lives chiefly on their carcases, often springing upon them in narrow defiles, or from the banks of ravines through which they are passing to obtain water; and whenever it is enabled thus to fasten its claws upon them, is sure to bring them to the ground. In their contentions with Man or Beast they seem to be governed by no discretion, but urged on solely by an indomitable voracity, which sets them at once to devouring their enemy when a partial advantage is gained, by which indiscretion they often easily fall by the hands of enemies to whom their terrible strength might have given far more desperate and disastrous battle.

Plate Nº 20.

ANTELOPE SHOOTING.

The Antelope (Furcifer) of the Prairies and Rocky Mountains of America, which I believe to be different from all other known varieties, forms one of the most pleasing living ornaments of the Western World. Their flesh, which is excellent food, contributes essentially to the Indian's larder; and the modes of hunting them, much to his amusement. They are met in some parts in almost incredible numbers, sporting and playing about the hills and dales; and often, in flocks of fifty or a hundred, will follow the boat of the descending voyageur on the Missouri, or the travelling caravan, for hours together, keeping off at a safe distance on the right or left, galloping up and down the hills, blowing through their noses, and stamping with their feet, as if they were endeavouring to remind the traveller through those realms of the wicked trespass he was making on their own hallowed ground.

These beautiful and delicate little animals seem to be endowed, like many other "gentle and sweet-breathing creatures," with an undue share of curiosity, often leading them to a sort of voluntary destruction; and the hunter who wishes to entrap them easily does so without taking the trouble of travelling after them. For this purpose, when he has been discovered by